

dropped out of high school get their GED, and CAMP assists migrant students in their first year of college with both counseling and stipends.

The children of migrant farm workers face the highest dropout rate among all other Hispanic American ethnic groups. Current estimates place the dropout rate for migrant at between 50 and 60 percent. Before the Federal Government created CAMP programs, there was no record of a migrant child having completed college. With HEP and CAMP these students are making amazing progress. At the State University of New York at Oneonta, both programs serve students from migrant and seasonal farm working families from New York, Maine, Pennsylvania and Connecticut. This year, Luis, a New Yorker and former HEP and CAMP student will be entering as a sophomore at SUNY-Oneonta. Luis' experience as a migrant youth is shared by countless other children of migrant and seasonal farm workers.

For many migrant children, moving from state to state can take its toll. For Luis, it resulted in a pattern of repeating grades until he quit school to work with his father in the vineyards in Western New York. A year later, he learned about High School Equivalency Program, HEP. With the assistance of the HEP program, he earned his GED, applied to college, and was accepted to SUNY last year as biology major. As a CAMP student, Luis received vital academic, social, and financial support during his first year of college, the most critical year for most first-generation college students.

Luis now mentors other CAMP students, is a member of the Migrant AmeriCorps program and has maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.04. Securing additional resources for HEP and CAMP will help ensure the dreams of students like Luis become reality. I also support increasing funding for Hispanic Serving Institutions, HSIs.

For New York this increase will help 12 colleges and universities expand their capacity to serve a large and growing number of Hispanic students. By supporting these institutions we are recognizing the large contribution they make to increasing access to higher education for traditionally underserved communities, and are making the dream of college a reality for many more Hispanics. The condition of America's future will depend upon how well we meet the demand for an educated workforce.

Cuts in education programs might help balance the books in the short-term, but it is a bad idea for our economy in the long-term. We need a highly skilled workforce to compete in this global economy and investing in the education and training of our Hispanic population will help our Nation meet this challenge.

I therefore urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask that we now be in a period of morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DC SCHOOLS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate Appropriations Committee passed legislation that has real promise, and that promise goes to the heart of offering the schoolchildren of this city, the District of Columbia, a genuine, a real opportunity to achieve an education. Specifically, I am talking about the DC Choice Program, a program my colleague from New Hampshire, Senator JUDD GREGG, has worked so very hard on over the past several months; an issue that other colleagues, especially MIKE DEWINE, the Senator from Ohio, has been so committed to; an issue that colleagues from the other side of the aisle, Senator FEINSTEIN and Senator BYRD, are both committed to. Indeed, both showed, I believe, bold and courageous action on behalf of the Capital City's schoolchildren.

The District of Columbia appropriations bill provides \$40 million for public schools here in the Capital City. That money will be divided between public charter schools and a new private school tuition program that would offer up to \$7,500 per student for about 2,000 additional students.

Regrettably, some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle supported doing nothing, supported the status quo. They refuse to allow 2,000 of the District's schoolchildren who are from hard-working, low-income families to have that opportunity of earning a better education. They would rather trap these children in failing schools. They would rather tolerate failure than take a chance at success.

The record of the District's public schools is shocking. Despite unprecedented Federal and local spending in the District totaling about \$12,000 per student, the District's scores are the lowest in the Nation. Only 10 percent of the District's fourth graders are proficient at reading. Fewer than 12 percent of District fourth graders can write at grade level. Only 6 percent of District fourth graders can do math at a proficient level.

This is a disgrace. DC's public schools are graduating children who cannot read, who cannot write, who cannot add, and who cannot subtract. Would any of us in this Chamber allow our children to be illiterate and unable to do simple fourth grade math problems? The answer is obvious.

In fact, many of those who oppose Choice for the Capital's schoolchildren send their own children to private schools where their children are able to read great literature, learn calculus, learn physics, and dream about careers in anthropology, or careers in aeronautics, and, indeed, go on to competitive colleges and universities.

Unlike some of my colleagues here on the Hill, the locally elected officials from the District itself want the very same for the District's school age kids. They are determined that the District schoolchildren will learn to read and to write and thereby share in that American dream. The city's Mayor, Anthony Williams, understands that. The DC Board of Education president, Peggy Cooper Cafritz, and city council member Kevin P. Chavous are all courageously advancing the cause of universal education for kids here in the District of Columbia. They understand it. Most importantly, the people who understand it and who are leading the fight are the parents of the kids here in the District.

Across the city, parents are lining up in order to obtain better options and better alternatives for their children. The need is so intense that the District Public School Choice Programs are now way oversubscribed. Each year, more than 1,000 schoolchildren are "wait-listed" for the city's magnet programs. Charter schools educate right around 15 percent of DC kids, with nearly 11,500 children in attendance and another 1,000 on waiting lists to get into these charter schools.

When John Walton and Ted Forstmann invested \$2 million in the Children's Scholarship Fund here in the District, more than 10,000 families applied for about 1,000 seats.

Virginia Walden-Ford, the executive director of DC Parents for School Choice and a mother of three, knows first hand how desperately parents want a better education for their children. She tells me that each week she receives in her organization hundreds of calls just about this issue of having a better choice, a better alternative. She knows first hand the desperation of these parents.

Virginia had to take matters into her own hands when her son was having trouble in school. He was skipping school. He was having run-ins with the law. He felt like no one cared. He also felt peer pressure to not work hard, to not achieve, to not aspire. Virginia, as a parent, was terrified. We all would feel this way. She was terrified of what would happen if her son stayed in that environment—if he stayed or was trapped along this path that would lead to nowhere. So she decided as a parent to make a difference and to make a change. She sent him to a private school. And within 2 weeks she tells me her son, who she was so worried about being trapped in this environment in which there was no escape whatsoever and no opportunity to achieve that American dream, was transformed—no more getting into trouble, no more skipping school, no more getting into trouble with the police, no more skipped homework assignments. Virginia asked him why. What made that difference? What led to that transformation?

Her son told her very directly that the teachers for the first time cared